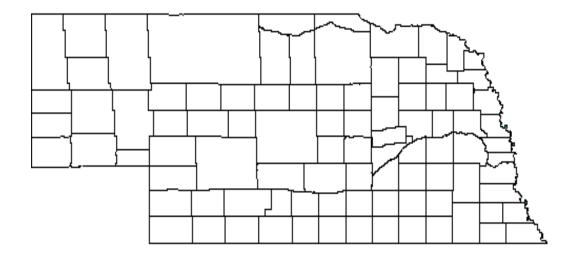
# Nebraska HIV/AIDS Housing Plan

# **Executive Summary**



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## **Executive Summary**

"More than anything, I could handle this disease and manage my life better if I knew I had a place to call home."

Person living with HIV/AIDS in Nebraska

## Nebraska HIV/AIDS Housing Plan

The *Nebraska HIV/AIDS Housing Plan* is the culmination of a nine-month planning process that brought together a wide range of community stakeholders to consider and plan for the housing needs of Nebraskans living with HIV/AIDS and their families. Housing and services providers, people living with HIV/AIDS, and others statewide participated in the needs assessment process and provided input and feedback on the *Nebraska HIV/AIDS Housing Plan*.

Given the dynamic nature of HIV disease and other factors that affect HIV/AIDS housing planning, it is essential to regularly reassess the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS and the most appropriate strategies to meet those needs. It is intended that this plan be built upon, revised, and expanded as current objectives are met and new gaps and needs emerge.

## **Community Participation in the Needs Assessment Process**

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services convened the needs assessment and planning process and invited a broad range of community stakeholders to participate. A **Steering Committee** was formed in February 2003 to oversee and guide the needs assessment and planning process. The committee was comprised of people living with HIV/AIDS and representatives from community-based organizations that provide housing and services to people with low incomes and/or special needs.

In addition to participating in Steering Committee meetings, **people living with HIV/AIDS** participated in the needs assessment process though a housing survey and consumer focus groups. In 2002, a total of 215 people living with HIV/AIDS completed a **housing survey** that posed questions about individuals' housing histories, needs, and preferences. People living with HIV/AIDS from around the state participated in **focus groups**, which allowed participants to discuss their housing situations, needs, and preferences in more detail than the survey had allowed.

Interviews were held with **key stakeholders** from throughout the state, including case managers, housing and service providers, housing developers, government representatives, clinical social workers, medical providers, and other concerned community members, including members of the Steering Committee. These stakeholders were identified as those most knowledgeable as well as able to provide leadership in the future on related issues.

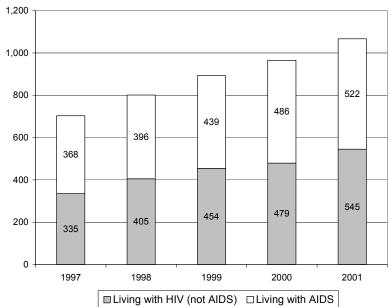
## The Context of HIV/AIDS Housing in Nebraska

Because medical advances are helping people with HIV/AIDS live longer lives, there are now more people living with HIV/AIDS—who are potentially in need of related assistance—than ever before.

At the end of 2002, a total of 1,112 Nebraskans were living with HIV/AIDS, including 557 people living with AIDS and another 555 people living with HIV who had not been diagnosed with AIDS.

People of color are disproportionately impacted by HIV/AIDS in Nebraska, particularly African Americans. Compared to just 6 percent of the state's population, almost one-quarter (24 percent) of those living with HIV/AIDS are African Americans.

Increasingly, younger people are affected by HIV/AIDS. While less than one-quarter of those living with AIDS are under 30 years old, 40 percent of those living with HIV are in this age group.



People living with HIV/AIDS in Nebraska experience many of the same challenges as other Nebraskans, especially those with low incomes—difficulties finding affordable, good-quality housing, overcoming geographic barriers to access medical care, services, and employment, and limited employment opportunities in many areas.

Many people have difficulty paying housing costs. For example, in Omaha, a one-bedroom apartment at Fair Market Rent (FMR) is unaffordable to a full-time minimum wage worker. The gap between the FMR and what a person can afford to pay is \$224. Key stakeholders identified the lack of safe, affordable housing units, in both rural and urban areas, as the primary barrier to finding and maintaining stable housing.

More than a quarter of those who responded to the housing survey had incomes less than \$500 per month, which is below poverty level. Slightly more than one-third of respondents were "severely housing cost burdened," paying more than half of their income for housing, while just 12 percent had regular assistance paying their

Monthly SSI payment equivalent to just 17% of the state median income		\$552
Percentage at which rent is affordable according to HUD's standards	X	30%
Available to pay for housing	=	\$166

housing costs. In addition, 15 percent had faced eviction in the past year, and 39 percent had been homeless since testing positive for HIV.

Across Nebraska, many people living with HIV/AIDS continue to hide their health status in fear of the negative impact disclosure may have on their families, employment, health insurance, housing, and physical safety. This affects the willingness of people living with HIV/AIDS to reach out for support and assistance, especially people living in smaller communities, rural settings, and culturally based communities.

There are two major federal programs dedicated to serving the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS that can be used for housing. The Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is the primary source of funding dedicated to meeting the housing needs of people living with HIV/AIDS. Nebraska is not eligible to receive a formula allocation of HOPWA funds because less than 1,500 cumulative cases of AIDS have been reported statewide. However, in June 2003, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services partnered with the Nebraska AIDS Project and other community stakeholders to submit an application for HOPWA Competitive funds, which proposed a range of housing initiatives.

Nebraska receives funding dedicated to serving people living with HIV/AIDS from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Ryan White

The Nebraska AIDS Project (NAP) is the only AIDS service organization in Nebraska. Founded in 1984, NAP provides a range of services to people living with HIV/AIDS in Nebraska, southwest lowa, and eastern Wyoming, including case management, support groups, education and prevention, HIV counseling and testing, Nebraska AIDS Hotline, and programs for priority populations. Case management and other support services are available to people living with HIV/AIDS through five offices located in Kearney, Lincoln, Norfolk, Omaha, and Scottsbluff. The Watanabe Wellness Center is located in Omaha and provides clients access to a resource center for AIDS-related issues, mental health services, breakfasts, lunches. massage, and other complimentary therapies. In 2002, a total of 723 unduplicated clients were served through NAP programs.

CARE Act. Although these funds allow for the provision of many valuable services, they alone cannot and should not be the sole source of support for people living with HIV/AIDS.

## Critical Issues in Housing People Living with HIV/AIDS

The Steering Committee reviewed findings from the needs assessment activities and identified the critical issues that most impact the provision of housing and services to people living with HIV/AIDS.

## Stigma and Discrimination Seriously Impact Access to Housing

Throughout Nebraska, people living with HIV/AIDS and their families, service providers, and the general community are impacted by fear, stigma, and discrimination related to HIV and a lack of accurate knowledge about the disease. These issues can directly impact access to housing and feelings of housing stability. They were raised in every consumer focus group and most key stakeholder interviews. Many survey respondents and focus group participants feared losing their

housing if they disclosed their HIV status to their landlord or mortgage holder. People living with HIV/AIDS and service providers related incidents of violence and discrimination experienced by people simply because they were living with HIV/AIDS. Steering Committee members identified five specific issues that are related to this topic:

- People living with HIV/AIDS in Nebraska are impacted significantly by HIV-related stigma. The fear of being stigmatized affects individuals' willingness to access needed services.
- There is a lack of understanding on the part of some service providers of the need for and importance of **confidentiality** related to HIV and the impact that fear of disclosure has on the willingness of people living with HIV/AIDS to access services for which they may be eligible.

"Stigma is a thousand-pound gorilla that most of us carry around, even providers."

Key Stakeholder

- **Fear of HIV/AIDS** on the part of service providers and community members impacts the ability of people living with the disease to access jobs, housing, and services.
- The **lack of community education** about HIV/AIDS impacts the acceptance of people living with the disease.
- Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Nebraskans experience stigma and discrimination based on their sexual orientation, regardless of their HIV status. As a result, Nebraskans living with HIV disease who are or are perceived to be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender may experience heightened stigma and discrimination.

## **Lack of Appropriate Affordable Housing Options**

More than one-third of people who completed the housing survey were at risk of homelessness because of their housing cost burden. The lack of appropriate affordable housing is clearly a very significant issue in Nebraska and is the primary housing barrier for all people with low incomes, including those living with HIV/AIDS. People living with HIV/AIDS and key stakeholders who participated in the needs assessment identified challenges in locating housing that was of a decent quality, convenient, and affordable to consumers given their incomes. More than a quarter had accessed financial assistance in the past to prevent homelessness. Steering Committee members identified four specific issues that are related to this topic:

- There is a **lack of affordable, safe, decent, and appropriate housing** that limits access to the full continuum of housing options for people living with HIV/AIDS.
- There is **limited funding** available to support the creation and maintenance of needed programs.
- Housing providers and HIV/AIDS service providers need to increase collaboration.
- People living with HIV/AIDS and service providers need **more information** about and awareness of available housing options.

## Access to and Availability of All Necessary Support Services

Access to appropriate services supports housing stability. Housing alone will not ensure health, stability, and quality of life for people living with HIV/AIDS without access to a range of medical and support services. The affordability of available resources is also an important consideration. For example, an individual who is eligible for assistance through the Medicaid program may not be able

to afford the required co-pay for prescriptions. Steering Committee members identified six specific issues that are related to this topic:

- The housing and related service needs of people living with HIV/AIDS have **changed and expanded** as people are living longer with the disease.
- It is challenging to meet the needs of **an increasingly diverse population** of people living with HIV/AIDS. Specific barriers to accessing services included: language, cultural differences based on race and ethnicity, and the lack of cultural diversity among providers of HIV-related services.
- Not all clients understand **the role of case managers** and that through accessing case management support their needs are more likely to be anticipated and met to avoid crisis.
- **Linkages** between housing and all necessary support services are lacking for many people living with HIV/AIDS, including both those in need of housing and those who are housed.
- There is a **lack of transportation options** for people in both urban and rural areas of the state.
- A lack of **medical**, **dental**, **and case management services** to adequately address the global needs of persons living with HIV/AIDS was identified.

## Financial Issues for People Living with HIV/AIDS

Many people living with HIV/AIDS survive on very limited incomes and struggle to meet their daily financial obligations. More than a quarter of survey respondents reported incomes well below the poverty level. Steering Committee members identified three specific issues that are related to this topic:

"You can sleep in your car, but you can't drive your house."

Person living with HIV/AIDS in Nebraska

- Due to the physical challenges faced by people living with HIV/AIDS and the inability of many to maintain employment, poverty is a significant barrier to obtaining and maintaining adequate housing and accessing needed services and information.
- Some people living with HIV/AIDS have high medical expenses, which impacts their financial situation and credit rating and subsequently **limits their access** to certain housing options.
- People living with HIV/AIDS and service providers need more information about and awareness of training and employment opportunities available to disabled persons.

## **Recommendations and Strategies Developed to Meet Need**

Initially, responsibility to implement the plan's recommendations will rest with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and the Nebraska AIDS Project, as the two agencies that historically have taken the lead on HIV/AIDS housing issues in Nebraska. The goal is that leadership will continue to emerge from a broader group of community stakeholders in order to make the best use of existing expertise and resources. The implementation of each recommendation will require the collaboration of a range of stakeholders and more detailed action planning. Ultimate leadership will hopefully come to rest in a collaboration of housing and support service experts and/or agencies.

## Stigma and Discrimination Seriously Impact Access to Housing

The following strategies were developed to address the critical issues related to stigma and discrimination:

- 1. Educate community stakeholders about HIV disease and the impact of HIV/AIDS in Nebraska in order to increase awareness and acceptance of people living with HIV/AIDS and to dispel myths about HIV/AIDS and Nebraskans who live with the disease.
  - Community stakeholders to be targeted for education efforts include: the general public and community groups; policy makers and politicians; housing authorities, property managers, and landlords; support service providers, including health-care providers and employment/job training programs; and populations living with and at risk for the disease.
  - Strategies that will support education include the following:
    - Humanize people living with the disease through the sharing of personal stories and experiences. Clearly articulate the range of people affected by HIV (race, age, class, sexual orientation, etc.). Make information available through public service announcements, Web sites, public speaking, etc.
    - Build on existing relationships to increase awareness and support. For example, engage a
      knowledgeable and benevolent landlord, service provider, pastor, or other community
      member in community education efforts.
    - Support state and local leaders who include people living with HIV/AIDS, as appropriate, in their public comments, and work to increase public support for such inclusion.
    - Continue and enhance existing HIV prevention efforts. Continue to engage faith-based organizations in these efforts.
- 2. Increase housing stability and access to housing resources for people living with HIV/AIDS by educating them about fair housing laws and the standard operating procedures of housing authorities as they relate to confidentiality and the disclosure of disability status. Explore and develop strategies to ensure people living with HIV/AIDS have the information they need about their housing rights in order to avoid experiences of discrimination in housing.

## **Lack of Appropriate Affordable Housing Options**

In order to address the critical issues related to the lack of affordable housing, the following strategies were developed:

- 1. Increase affordable housing units accessible to people living with HIV/AIDS. Strategies that will support increased access include the following:
  - Develop and enhance partnerships between HIV/AIDS service providers and affordable and special needs housing providers.
  - Ensure the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS are represented in housing and service planning processes, including local Continuum of Care planning for homeless services and Consolidated Plan processes.

- Apply for all additional federal, state, local, and private resources that will support the implementation of affordable housing strategies identified in the plan or subsequently developed to address emerging need.
- Advocate to governmental entities at the federal, state, and local levels for political support and funding for affordable housing development.
- 2. Increase opportunities for emergency housing solutions generally, and improve access to assistance for persons living with HIV/AIDS. Strategies that will support improved access include the following:
  - Increase linkages between AIDS service providers and emergency assistance programs.
  - Educate people living with HIV/AIDS about existing programs.
  - Develop additional target resources, if needed.
- 3. Increase housing stability and access to housing resources for people living with HIV/AIDS through education. Support success in housing by providing education and training about:
  - Available housing options and opportunities and how to access them
  - Tenant rights and responsibilities and fair housing laws
  - Housing search strategies
  - Life-skills development
  - Money management, budgeting, and credit repair
  - Housing readiness
  - Relapse-prevention strategies
- 4. Develop a comprehensive listing of HIV/AIDS services available in Nebraska, including eligibility criteria and contact information. Increase awareness of programs and guidelines by widely distributing this listing to housing and service providers throughout the state. Make the material available in forms and locations such that people could access relevant information without disclosing their HIV status.

## Access to and Availability of All Necessary Support Services

The following strategies were developed to address the critical issues related to access to and the availability of all necessary support services:

- 1. Educate people living with HIV/AIDS about the services available both through the HIV/AIDS service system and the other service systems in the state.
- 2. Advocate for additional case management services for people living with HIV/AIDS in order to increase the support available to each client through this system.
- 3. Explore opportunities to develop a comprehensive peer-to-peer mentoring program to assist people living with HIV/AIDS to access housing and services and to provide peer support to those living with the disease.

- 4. Increase resources available to people living with HIV/AIDS who have mental health and/or substance use issues by maintaining and enhancing linkages between AIDS service providers and mental health and substance use treatment providers.
- 5. Increase access to appropriate services for people who are monolingual (in a language other than English) by ensuring the availability of translated materials and access to translators. Increase volunteerism among people who are bilingual. Maintain and enhance linkages between AIDS service providers and agencies currently serving monolingual populations.
- 6. Develop additional transportation options in order to increase access to medical and support services for people living with HIV/AIDS.
- 7. Increase the availability of support services to people living in rural areas of the state.

## Financial Issues for People Living with HIV/AIDS

The following strategy was developed to address the critical issues related to financial issues for people living with HIV/AIDS:

1. Enhance economic opportunities for persons living with HIV/AIDS to support housing stability. Develop and enhance linkages between AIDS service providers and employment and job training programs in Nebraska, including Vocational Rehabilitation, Workforce Development, and the Ticket-to-Work program.

## **Ongoing and Future Plan Implementation**

The Nebraska HIV/AIDS housing needs assessment and planning process increased connections among people across the state and provided a deeper understanding of the housing needs of people living with HIV/AIDS. The *Nebraska HIV/AIDS Housing Plan* includes implementation principles and preliminary action steps that represent but one of the next steps in this ongoing process. The implementation of effective initiatives and programs relies on increased community knowledge, successful partnerships, and continued assessment and planning. The stakeholders involved in this process have an ongoing commitment to addressing all the identified needs through further action planning, increased collaboration and partnerships, and securing new sources of funding to support programs.

## **Steering Committee Meeting Attendees**

The following individuals participated in one or more meetings of the Nebraska HIV/AIDS housing needs assessment Steering Committee. They are listed by name and agency affiliation. Their leadership and dedication were invaluable.

**Becky Aboushady** 

Nebraska AIDS Project

Diane K. Adams

Lexington Housing Authority

Kim Anderson

South Central Behavioral Services

Nancy J. Bentley

Scotts Bluff County Housing Authority

**Amanda Buscher** 

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Jean Chicoine

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Nebraska Homeless Assistance Program

Theresa Christensen

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**Leslie Clark** 

Community Member

**Heather Cline-Ford** 

Central Nebraska Community Services

**Daniel Cobos** 

University of Nebraska Medical Center Rvan White Title III/ADAP

Pat Compton

Nebraska Department of Economic Development

Joseph Conrad

Nebraska AIDS Project

**Becky Diercks** 

Community Action Partnership of Mid-Nebraska

**Demond Flowers** 

Family Housing Advisory Services

Steve French

Nebraska AIDS Project Volunteer

Steve Gable

Nebraska AIDS Project Volunteer, NRRC. PWA, NAPWA

**Dana Grisham** 

Community Alliance, Omaha

Barbara Hansen

Nebraska AIDS Project

**Gary Henderson** 

Community Member

**Dennis Hoffman** 

Centerpointe, Lincoln

**Judy Hughes-Anderson** 

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

Sandra Klocke

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

**Connie Longie** 

Panhandle Mental Health Center

William R. Mann

Nebraska AIDS Project Volunteer

**Tom Maxson** 

Freedom House

South Central Behavioral Services

**Betty Medinger, LCSW** 

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Child Care, Community Service Block Grant, and Nebraska Homeless Assistance Program

Janet Oberhauser

CPG Northern Region

**Amy Ondrak** 

NRRC

Karen Parde

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Community Service Block Grant **Paulette Pool** 

Hastings Housing Authority

**Erin Porterfield** 

Nebraska AIDS Project

Mike Saklar

Siena/Francis House, Omaha

**Brad Schmeichel** 

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**Galen Sears** 

NRRC

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T.J. Seward

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Ron Snell

Lincoln Connection. North Platte

Tim Sullivan

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**David Traster** 

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**Cindy White** 

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**Elaine Wiseman** 

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**Amy Davidson** 

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Planning Team Coordinator

Kate Kingery

Housing Planner

**Tawni Stetson** 

Planning Assistant

## **Key Stakeholders**

The following individuals participated in meetings and interviews as part of the Nebraska HIV/AIDS housing needs assessment process. They are listed by name and agency affiliation and the list is organized by city.

The contribution of the stakeholders listed below, along with that of people living with HIV/AIDS who participated in focus groups, is gratefully acknowledged.

## Columbus

**Howard Smith** 

Columbus Housing Authority

#### **Fremont**

Sue Kleider

Fremont Housing Authority

**Suzanne Smith** 

The Crisis Center for Domestic Abuse/Sexual Assault

Captain Abe Tamayo

The Salvation Army

#### Gering

Barbara Blourock, Ph.D.

Community Member

Nancy J. Bentley

Scotts Bluff County Housing Authority

**Janet Soule** 

Panhandle Community Services Community Health Center

## **Grand Island**

**Nancy Casarez** 

Behavioral Health Services

Goodwill Industries of Greater Nebraska Inc.

**Heather Cline-Ford** 

Central Nebraska Community Services

**Tom Conlon** 

Goodwill Industries of Greater Nebraska Inc.

Jerenne Garroutte

City of Grand Island

**Cindy Preisendorf** 

Community Human Resource Center

Rick Ruzicka

Hall County Housing Authority

## <u>Hastings</u>

Linda Addison

Housing Development Corporation

**Tom Schick** 

Catholic Social Services

## **Kearney**

**Sharon Fox** 

Residential Assistance to Families in Transition (RAFT)

Barbara Hansen

Nebraska AIDS Project

**Tom Maxson** 

South Central Behavioral Services

**Amy Stump** 

Nebraska AIDS Project

#### Lincoln

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## **Lincoln (continued)**

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#### Mike Fallesen

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#### Mary Hepburn O'Shea

O.U.R. Homes

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#### **CJ Johnson**

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NAF Multicultural Human Development Corporation

#### **Caroline Negretti**

**DayWatch** 

#### **Larry Potratz**

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#### **Ron Ross**

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

#### **Dean Settle**

Community Mental Health Center of Lancaster County

#### **Peg Sneller-Hamilton**

Cedars Youth Services

#### Jeri Weberg-Bryce

Nebraska AIDS Project

#### **Russ Wren**

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Ryan White Title II

## **Loup City**

#### **Cheryl Holcomb**

Central Nebraska Community Services

#### Norfolk

#### **Connie Mazoula**

Temporary Housing Association (THAT) St. Vincent De Paul

#### **Paul McIntosh**

Liberty Center Services

#### **Sheila Miller**

Norfolk Housing Authority

#### **Judy Wilson**

The Link (Men's Halfway)

## **North Platte**

#### Jennifer L. Fisher

Lutheran Family Services of Nebraska, Inc. Center for Healthy Families

#### Debra Morgan

North Platte Housing Authority

#### Rachel Stahr

NAF Multicultural Human Development Corporation

#### **Nancy Striebel**

Lincoln City Community Development Corporation

#### **Omaha**

#### **Greq Burfitt**

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

#### **Amanda Buscher**

Nebraska AIDS Project

#### **Jacqueline Cook**

Charles Drew Health Center

#### **Margie Dumas**

American Red Cross Consumer Advocate Heartland Chapter

## Omaha (continued)

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**Demond Flowers** 

Family Housing Advisory Services

**Patrick Ford** 

Nebraska Legal Services

Kristy Gill

Nebraska AIDS Project

Alex Gray

**GOCA** 

**Dana Grisham** 

Community Alliance, Omaha

**Rosey Higgs** 

Nebraska AIDS Project

Juanita L. James

Omaha Housing Authority

**Lucie Long** 

Nebraska AIDS Project

Michelle Oestmann

Nebraska AIDS Project

Ben Osborn

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

**Erin Porterfield** 

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T.J. Seward

Nebraska AIDS Project

**Tim Sullivan** 

Nebraska AIDS Project

Susan Swindells, M.B.B.S.

University of Nebraska Medical Center

Angela Tuininga

Nebraska AIDS Project

## **Scottsbluff**

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Cirrus House

**Barbara Jolliffe** 

Panhandle Substance Abuse Council

**Kim Loomis** 

In Touch Counseling

J. Martin Vargas

Panhandle Community Services Migrant Health Program

John McVay

Panhandle Mental Health Center

Jill Young

Nebraska AIDS Project

## Wisner

**Craig Malmberg** 

Goldenrod Hills Community Services